Avi Ganor

RealityTrauma
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RealityTrauma

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Avi Ganor has engaged in photography since 1975. He was among the first Israeli artists to present a solo exhibition at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art (1985). From the outset of his artistic career, Ganor has addressed the theoretical aspects of the medium, exploring the relationship between image and text, while studying the authority and validity of the written word versus those of the photographic image.

In recent years these investigations have taken a fundamental turn due to the fascinating encounter created by Ganor between the concept of “reality” and the concept of “trauma,” which evades apt representation, whether verbal or visual, and their integration, via personal, documentary photography, into a new concept—RealityTrauma. Ganor’s poetic approach and his humanistic stance are present in the works as an essential, unique element, enabling fresh confrontation of horror in the face of the unfamiliar and non-representable, as well as original observation, from a skeptical vantage point, at our ability to grasp the absolute.

We congratulate Avi Ganor for this topical, moving exhibition. Heartfelt thanks to Nili Goren, the curator of the exhibition. Thanks to Mati Shemoelof for his thought-provoking essay in the catalogue. Thanks to Shlomit Dov, the catalogue designer, for her attentive creative work; to Dania Kassovsky for editing and translating the texts; to Tamar Fox and Sigal Adler, the English and Hebrew editors. Thanks to all members of the Museum staff from the different departments who contributed to the production of the exhibition.

Prof. Mordechai Omer
Director and Chief Curator
Alienated Past and Alienated Present: 
On the Engagement with Nightmarish Light

The exhibition “RealityTrauma” is centered—conceptually, cyclically, and concretely—
on two notions: reality and trauma, which emerge connected like Siamese twins. In order to trace their meaning, one must first perform an initial (painful) surgical separation. The dissociation of the conjoined bodies will be performed in theory, only to reveal that we move in a concentric circle around the work, which, concurrently, moves in a concentric circle around us. For, in actuality there are not really two poles between reality and trauma, but rather constant movement between the gaze turned at the work and the undecipherable work, like the symptom which ties the two together to generate meaning.

Etymologically, the word “trauma” comes from the Greek word for wound, τραῦμα. (In medicine, the function of Trauma Department is embodied by the immediacy of the treatment required by the patients). One of the major features of trauma is its inherent latency or belatedness—the inability of the trauma victim to grasp and assimilate the traumatic experience in real time. Therefore, the traumatic event continues to haunt the victim and recur in his dreams or in his daily life. Freud uses the “traumatic experience” in his early endeavors to define the rudiments of psychoanalysis: “The therapist’s role is thus to help the patient restore the original experience (the traumatic experience) in his memory, whereas the symptom, which functions as a substitute, is expected to disappear. This process of reconstruction, however, is all but simple, since the same forces which worked to make the experience or the painful memory be forgotten from the very outset, continue to stand guard and thwart any attempt to reintroduce the denied content to consciousness. Thus, due to the operation of these ‘resistance mechanisms,’ the therapist cannot simply ask the patient: ‘Please tell me exactly what happened and how;’ but rather, like an expert detective, he must employ various indirect methods to restore the fragments of information which have escaped the patient’s memory.”

The project of psychoanalysis thus holds a theological dimension of confession as well as a hermeneutical sense of stitching and reconstructing the text while unveling it. The sharp transition from the modernist concept of the progressive era to the postmodern concept which criticizes the narrative and the redemptive option lies in Slavoj Žižek’s reply to Freud. The Slovenian philosopher reverses the goal of psychoanalysis, only to replace the text’s confession with a reconstruction of its context: “[T]he ultimate goal of psychoanalysis is not the confessionary pacification/ghettoization of the trauma, but the acceptance of the very fact that our lives involve a traumatic kernel beyond redemption, that there is a dimension of our being which forever resists redemption—deliverance.” The question thus arises, does “RealityTrauma” set out to introduce the trauma as a possibility of dubbing the text (solving its riddle or enabling us to live with the secret, hidden trauma (furnishing the un-solved riddle with a relevant context)?

The term “reality” comes to photography from several different directions. It may be viewed as an outcome of photography’s constitution within realism: “The view that the world has real, autonomous existence and does not depend on our convictions and concepts.” In this view, the works in “RealityTrauma” enjoy an autonomy, whereas the trauma acquires a meta-textual, intra-photographic context which will be discussed below. Another way to conceptualize “reality” is as that which makes for reflexivity. “Reality,” as a television entertainment genre, enables us to observe reality as it is captured in a confined space before the lenses of multiple cameras. We observe “ourselves” being observed without knowing who is watching us and why we require that surveillance. One may contemplate surveillance through the model of the “Martians” introduced by Roland Barthes in Mythologies, maintaining that “[T]he Double is a Judge. […] The judge is born in the same site where the executioner threatens.” We observe our surveillance through the double-participating in the reality; the game liberates us from the intimidating direct gaze. The structure of the “reality” calls to mind the Panopticon, an architectural apparatus contrived by philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) as a disciplining and organization device: a prison space where each inmate can be seen by the wardens at all times, but no prisoner can ever see another prisoner or the source of surveillance. According to Michel Foucault, this model offers a key metaphor for modern disciplinary power based on isolation, individuation, and surveillance, whereby the individual must behave as if he were under constant scrutiny, even if this is not the case. Thus, this structure of spatial organization requires a very specific structure of power relations and behavioral restriction. We play the symptomatic surveillance game, namely “reality,” in order to indicate the way in which we are being scrutinized. It is a basic structure of meaning, one of whose expressions is its becoming transparent to us. Does Avi Ganor’s work transform the trauma into a type of “reality,” hence transparent and placeless?

Hagi Kenaan regards the expansion from within “reality” as a necessary condition for an orientation toward something else: “At the same time, this totalitarian structure is not total as it presents itself to our mind or imagination. When one finds an apt viewing angle—and it is no trivial matter to find such an angle—the concrete emergence of the frontal, the flat, surrenders cracks and loopholes, revealing that it is rife with disruptions and points of discontinuity. The concrete acquaintance with these apertures, which usually remain invisible—despite, or perhaps precisely because, they are located before our very eyes—is a necessary condition for reopening the question of orientation toward which that emerges. Can something else be seen through them?” “Reality” and “trauma” become connected, like Siamese twins. We were born into modernism, and therefore we believe that complex reality may be interpreted and thus elucidate the meaning of trauma. Growing up into the postmodern era makes it clear to us that the trauma is far more complex, and the demand for reality cannot be examined through the disappearance of shame (the ostensibly ultra-exposed cyber-space) nor through its voicing (the celebration of creating the “self” in the past three centuries and the disappearance of the collective consciousness of the Sovereign). It is precisely in an era in which the great secrets surface that we learn, dialectically, that the latent is greater than the visible.

5. Roland Barthes, The Empire of Signs and Other Mythologies (London: Routledge, 1982).
Trauma is a revolving door—the “real” object existing in itself. It calls into question hold in the water; it lies above it, reflecting and circumscribing it like a contour and a the subjective sensory means supposed to construct the objective “reality” as a negotiation between countless ... with the other, and we require a definition of the contextual link in order to live in acceptance with the trauma.

Meta-artistically, photography itself is conscious of desistance. The photographs attest to the imminent depletion. The act of erasure and the inability to symbolize, signify or indicate, defy the senses ... shoot a whole work, we are comically exposed to machines which “generate” the artistic discourse of photography. At the same time, these dramatic elements conceal the dialogic nature of the private case captured by the camera.

The gaze in RealityTime is frightful, extracting a cathartic beauty in two contexts: i. the way in which we are reluctant yet drawn to comprehend the RealityTrauma in real time; ii. the manner in which we yearn to suspend and concurrently long for the RealityTrauma in retrospect.

The exhibition “RealityTrauma” uses the interpretation of these notions in English rather than in Hebrew in the spirit of Bertolt Brecht’s coinage Verharmlosungsverfertig (the effect of estrangement or alienation). It strives to defamiliarize these concepts (reality and trauma) and suspend their connotations.

1. A Voyage to the Heart of the RealityTrauma Parking Lot

As in any comedy, we begin the journey into Gانون’s heart of darkness with a love story (Rescuing of an Eyelash) of a couple, and in the background—a city being built under the command of a “Shimshon Zelig” crane, with the fortuity of this combination between Samson (Shimshon), the omnipotent hero, and Zelig, Woody Allen’s anonymous fictive character who may be found in every historical period—a combination which offers us a taste of the humor that will accompany all the works, laughter which is the flip side of the most menacing of all. Fright spawns humor, which is also the essence of the horror deconstructed into a smile. The damaged car offers a hint at the flaw in both the relationship and the unfinished city. It is Roland Barthes’s punctum: the wound, the sentiment, and the passion arising from the viewed photograph to the spectator. The photographer leaves the photograph, and the work will soon be covered by consuming darkness. The somber atmosphere of the nightmarish light is the composition of the photograph which will accompany the works in diverse manners. The man removes an eyelash from the woman’s face in an intimate moment which enables observation and contact. This couplehood indicates a dialectical relationship. On the social level, the work assembles the scene in order to delve into the liberating and imprisoning trauma of thou-ness. On the individual level, we too are the outcome of an imaginary and a real relationship, whether partial or full. The contemplation of couplehood paves the way for us to its realization. But what will happen if the foundations of this construction are undermined? (In other words: what will happen to the photograph, to the viewer, after the death of the photographer? Why do we seek the photographer’s existence? Does the very search for the photographer embed the possibility of hiselimination?)

Tango with a Crow (2006) too offers an entry gate into Gانون’s Bakhtinian carnival. It is the couples’ dance performed before the crow, the celebration of life and the demand to remember death (memento mori). The threat comes from below: the shadows that cover the dance floor, as well as the dark clouds gathering above. The carnival is a moment in which the symbols are rearranged, but we do not know what its ending holds.10

The threatening atmosphere continues in the photograph of a pair of women pushing prams reminiscent of shopping carts, with three silver-colored Mazda cars behind them and three bare baby’s legs in front (Independence Day).11

With the built-up city in the background, we have two clues for reading the hints hold in the water; it lies above it, reflecting and circumscribing the light of formlessness emerging from the hermeneutical rift, and pointing, like the tip of a giant iceberg, at a deeper secret, on the one hand, and at the Spirit of God (above), which reflects the face of the deep, on the other. The Spirit of God with a formless face cannot be examined without this aforesaid dialogical gaze. The “descent” is an “ascent” furnishing us with understanding of the depths of human existence in the 21st century. The descent for the sake of ascent is also an aesthetic Hasidic ethics expressing the hybrid mixture of order and chaos.8

8. The Hebrew expression tohu v’tohu, denoting chaos, confusion or turmoil, evokes additional connotations. Tohu is also associated with wonder or awe (shoh), as well as with abyss (tehom), whereas bohu also connotes staring or bewilderment (behad). Connected together, they offer a telling alternative sound in the face of chaos.


of disruption (a carnival of consumption soon to transform into a carnivore of trash). First, the two palm trees are cut through the three Mazda cars. It is precisely the silvery cars arranged in a sacred triangle (later recurring in the flight of the three scrawny planes in Families), that are depicted in the center, while the trees lose their crowns. The women's three legs (one is absorbed in motion, another pops from the pram) are accentuated vis-à-vis the tower rising from the head of one of these female figures. The phalliccentric tower is higher than the three-legged women (like those new mythical creatures constructed and deconstructed in Ganor's work, which will reappear in other photographs too: the dancing couples in Tango with a Crow, The Siamese Twins, The Twin Firefighters, Birth of the Dinosaur, etc.).

The women walk ahead like that gaze at modernity, at progress, which is primarily in a vertical range of time, but also in a lateral calibration of the development of knowledge. It is the future that hides in the prams. Spatial (masculine) mechanization positions itself as the creator and destroyer of mankind. The imagination of this parking lot is primarily parked as the individual's fantasy on a parking lot: one tower, two women, two palm trees, three cars, and three legs. The overemphasis on the women and carriages, and the blurring of the setting indicate that the vertical and spatial clock has already begun to take the photograph out of focus, and that the time of those at its focal point is nearing its end. We do not know whether the future that lies in the prams will come to an end or be renewed through the emergence of a deus ex machina at the end of the grotesque.

In Families, the threat reaches the parking lot, and the triangular sign which was somewhat vague a moment ago, becomes a clearer signified. Three airplanes are pitted against the three women. The interpelled man eggs them on. His appearance takes us back to the paradox underlying the impossible dual question. The path still extends in white before them, leaving room for hope, vis-à-vis the sky which scatters cyan gray. The women's unawareness of the three planes is frightening, but also funny, as an “impossible” fact in the planning of petit bourgeois life in the rear. One more minute and the picture will dissolve, and life will move out of the picture, but where to?

Wardens Training portrays a group of jailers from the Ramla Prison practicing with guns whose barrels are blocked with red plugs (like clowns with guns that cannot shoot): the space is the same parking lot, an infernal symbol that has replaced Eden. A “Build Your Own House” project in the background accounts for the unbuilt story of that threatening unit. The dialogue between the orderly group, as an unknown language, and the commander with the drooping lip calls to mind the dialogue between the three women and the man's interpellation in Families. The forbidden line is found rather at the bottom of the work, like that red pavement of Ackerstein flagstones. The sky conveys a darkening air. It is a continuation of the forbidden and the trauma, undiggable under the asphalt. But the major drama is built on the unit protecting the self from raising the trauma into consciousness and its anonymous commander. Their implicit dialogue is also a chance to unravel the act; it is the gap between the commander and the unit. The unit has penetrated the parking lot, the front has infiltrated the rear, but this is a front neutralized of violence, somewhat ridiculous.

Cosmos portrays a square blurred in whiteness with a sign bearing the logo “Cosmos” above it. Here we discern the moment before the transition from the urban space, a transition from the superego into the realm of the id. The cosmos, as the Lacanian Name-of-the-Father category: the laws and restrictions that control both one's desire and the rules of communication. Here we deal with the name-of-the-father of the space that ironically echoes the possibility of a transcendental outer symbolic space or somehow nonprofit science. Capitalism borrows the Greek concept “cosmos” for its own needs. "Cosmos," however, contains a non-appropriate theological and philosophical meaning. The square is already covered with a white mist which will remove its green, its asphalt, and its ordering symbolic purpose. We shall reveal the animal dwelling underground—and above ground—with us. But the journey to raze the square and its transformation into a molehill is bound to take their toll. (In part II of this essay I shall discuss the molehill through a reading of Mole.) The odyssey from the capitalistic so-called modern cosmos to that of Greek theology will alienate the familiar.

II. A Tower Digging Deep into the Ground

In The Siamese Twins we watch two youths stretch through a fence; in their movement they create dual pairs of children which generate a new type of man, somewhat like a Siamese social and biological creature with diagonal legs. Two more youngsters exercise on the right side, one creates a rectangle, and the other is a headless half-bodied alien. The geometry of the soul, which shifts reality into subjective levels, is narrated through the poles of the fence which have neither beginning nor end. (At this point we already lose all ability to grasp a skyline as in Independence Day and Families). We gaze beyond the forbidden. We are unable to tell whether this is the mythical menagerie of Ganor's works in which the creatures are word symbols made of reality materials. Roland Barthes calls the rational observation emanating from the viewer onto the viewed photograph "studium." Could this thread that extends between us and Ganor's work be seen as uncanny (Freudian concept of an instance where something can be familiar, yet foreign at the same time resulting in feeling uncomfortably strange)? Is the work an alienated familiar? The entire work intrudes beyond the bars. But what are the geometrical features of the youngsters in relation to the space? In the absence of a heavenly skyline, the ground becomes a green sky of sorts. The comical reversal between heaven and earth, between man and a geometrical figure, reminds us of the infesability of Confucian salvation, which begins hierarchically from the Emperor downward. It is an alternative view of the values constituting the nature versus culture that leads into trauma. The gaze onto the ground is an observation of the end in order to generate a "beginning" as noted in the book of Ecclesiastes (7:2): "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart." A gaze toward death is a sublime thought since it is the house of mourning, the one which discerns the imminent apocalypse in human and social existence, that can cast life into our hearts. But the ground may also open and devour us, like those sinkholes that swallowed Korach and his company. How does one breathe under ground? Is the ground a border between life and death?

Almost depicts a bent-over body in an urban rural space. The sky opens up in comparison to the previous work, The Siamese Twins, but in various hues of a gray eye of an impending storm. The human body recuperates with a faceless gaze. Once again

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11. Interpellation, a notion developed by philosopher Louis Althusser, is a type of external call which structures us as disciplined subjects in space, e.g. a policeman who orders a civilian to stop, and the latter acknowledges the policeman's authority and stops.
there is a flaw in reality, and again there is a threat popping up at the side of the work. Nevertheless, there is a road here, and we acknowledge the redemptive context of discussion of a separate realm of categories (rural-urban, earth-heaven, field-dirt road). The trauma does not show its face, yet we are forced to lay bare the space between trauma and the binary underlying our constructions, to render it present. The body’s performance contains a quality of pregnancy, an inkling of the cocoon from which a context rather than an explanation will emerge.

The work Mole contains the same dirt mound which signifies a mole-rat’s downward burrowing (“mole” is popular lingo, although one ought to note that there are no moles in Israel, only in Europe). The work is a major key to Ganor’s oeuvre. At the center we see the small hill rising against the planned agricultural space. The “mole” undermines the division between city and country. It descends in order to bring up and mark the residue, and digs deep in the space created in its absence. The material accumulating around the molehill is but a small sign of the extensive tunnel (resulting from the “mole”) developed burrowing ability. The mole digs out fertile soil, subsequently infusing life inside. The mound calls the pyramids to mind, those monumental royal tombs which pointed upward in mystical order, while downward they constructed much longer, hidden tunnels to make for life after death. The reality as a breathing death of sorts. The tunnel is a type of grave of a living-dead since our subjectivity is unable to determine whether the “mole” below is breathing, dormant, or buried under its self-constructed edifice. The building downward is also accounted for by the existence of trauma. Trauma entrenches and protects itself from directly gazing into our eyes. It is faceless. Avi Ganor’s lens situates it at the center, actually as a buried tower; yet we are unable to gauge the spatial depth it occupies in the absence of concepts and categories regarding the digging activity underground. We must learn through the existence of its space, and find satisfactory contexts pertaining to the downward aspiration of the construction. The same inexplicable performance of body parts found at the center of Almost and The Siamese Twins now acquires a key code: they are constructed downward, and their figure is only metonymical of that which occurs at the depths of the iceberg of memory. It is not accidental that the metaphorical sky is green, the grays are lost, and we can barely assume an imaginary skyline from one side of the frame to the other. Ganor places at the center of discussion the premise regarding the journey of mortals into the depths of the Divine earth. The sky is embedded in the gaze at the absence innate to the cloths of earth. The land is to be torn, not the sky. The living reside within the earth like dead. The dead emerges within a performance of a Carnival featuring the dance of duality switching. But what is the price paid for undermining the ‘canny’ and a transition into the ‘uncanny’ and what will happen at the end of the battle of forces reluctant to remove the mask? It is also a reflexive insider discussion of the art of photography on the ability to conceptualize the art of the flash, of comical dismissal of photography’s claim as a positivist text without understanding the conventions of context and the social construction inherent to the dialogue between the realms of the viewer, the work, and the photographer.

In Wingate Institute we observe a man with a blower on a basketball court. We are already exposed to our previous knowledge of the reality burrowing (such as in Mole) into the intricate psychological structure of trauma. It is a Prometheus mole-world that exposes the inability of the senses to observe the trauma. The gate opens on the right side of the work. The bars which characterize our gaze at The Siamese Twins have been removed, and lie— we are inside the court and the gate is wide open. But the shadows—specters, Lucifer’s cherubs made from the playful sport (putting the ball in the basket)—become gradually covered, and the photograph is literally about to burn, all the more so as the blower itself erases itself on the one hand, or cannot withstand the great fire, on the other. We may stay and try to figure out the space and the absence created under the (human) body on the court. It is a forbidden game, which one may leave, but still the gate of salvation is so far away.

In Local Forest we observe morning mists alongside a tower in an Arcadia. The threat transpires in the figure of the aforementioned surveillance tower, without knowing who occupies it or why. Whether we transpire in the allowed or forbidden boundary of the gaze, we shall still remain under guard. In the absence of human body parts, the trees function in a performance of movement. Darkness gradually disappears, but the mist covers the ground like a double sky. They may give rise to the unknown, but also to the legendary. The impression makes the gaze at the ground and at the sky difficult. The duplication of the sky and the darkness standing like a villain in a melodrama on the right side of the work, make it difficult to generate a rational sensory subjectivity. The rural space (the height of the trees) surpasses the social control of the urban (tower). The dance of the trees produces the aforesaid imaginary mole’s hill mound, which occupies their heart in its absence. It is the calm before the storm.

In Digging the Hole, the body of two workers (Palestinian? Migrant laborers?) at a construction site produces a new, inexplicable body. We are faced with a fusion of our knowledge from the previous works; on the one hand, the metonymical human body in the performance of a new creature unites with the mole’s burrow. The crow versus the carnival in Tango with a Crow and the man’s interpellation movement toward the women threatened by the airplanes in Families, join the construction worker hand’s call for help (while digging). To whom does the hand turn? To us? To God? To Ramat Hasharon in Ganor’s biography? Is it a threat directed at the work which is soon to be swept downward into unknown chasms? How did these organs arrive to the pit? Is it a grave, or will a different knowledge erupt from it and ooze upward? The shovel (spanning the entire techné—human knowledge, art, and invention) turned toward us at the bottom of Digging the Hole and the fence of forbidden horror on the left—both lead the temporal moment into catastrophe and apocalypse. The exposure, however, is also liberating, precisely because the aforesaid mole pit is surrounded by additional earthen pregnancies on the left. The worker’s hand’s cry for help, for action, is also a prayer for dialogue with God. In that dangerous and liberating dialogue we are unable to see the full face of God, and he too learns about our part through the stretching of the hand (a redeeming mouth, much like the blue sky eye which bursts forth and droops on the upper left side of the work). The worker’s bare bottom ridicules the sublimity and gravity associated with the theological act. And this combination reinstates the invitation to take a journey into the edge of the upper bottom of the unknown with the spirit of carnival.

12. Viewing reality is deadening, as Noam Yoran eloquently explains this relationship between the new medium and the spectator. “The celeb as an institution is not a specific personality. It is the relation between the spectator and television, involving the former’s humiliation. The celeb as an institution is the relation by which the spectator accepts the fact that real life is on television, namely, that it’s own life, in front of the television, is inferior. As maintained by Gay Debecq in 1967 in his book Society of the Spectacle— one of the most important books for understanding mass media the spectator the more he contemplates, the less he loves”, Noam Yoran, “The Celeb is the Solid Reality, Reality is a Fleeting Phenomenon,” <http://www.avef.com/ DailyColomn/Pages/051111_A_wedding_with_Dudu_Aharon.aspx> [Hebrew].

Wingate Institute, Netanya, 2006
Mole, Poleg Nature Reserve, 2007
Digging the Hole, Tel Aviv, 2009
Local Forest, Poleg Nature Reserve, 2006
The Twin Firefighters, Petach Tikva, 2009
III. The Revival of the Catastrophe

In *The Twin Firefighters*, two fire brigade cadets, resembling children dressed up as Lego characters, emerge momentarily following the reintroduction of trauma to reality. These “masqueraded” security forces surrender the paradoxical fact that the future lies with them (because they are the children), yet it is artificial (a childhood memory of a Lego readymade). Perhaps they arrive too late, and those who raised the trauma to consciousness had already “committed suicide” in the encounter with the truth. A rainbow is created on the right side of the work, rendered by the impossible combination of a water hose and a smoke hose. Is this covenant not to repeat the experience (the flood), and if so—a pact between whom? In the center, slightly to the left, is another mound which likewise mocks the ability to expose the mole (death) residing in the ground’s depths. The firefighter caught walking with face not fully revealed, looks almost like a mechanical Lego doll thrust into the polluted area, into the disaster zone, the apocalypse. Cast life buoys ostensibly endeavor to recoup rescue attempts, and once again the question arises: between whom? The clear sky is duplicated in the black lake. The catastrophe materialized. The earthen path has become a path of turbid water. The Siamese twins, separated into firemen, traverse a scorched earth. The attempt to deal with the trauma has taken its toll, and perhaps this is only a first warning.

*Fire Event and a Policewoman*—a policewoman by a fire—calls to mind the forest expanses shrouded in mist featured in *Local Forest*. Here, however, the forest is seen after a fire (and perhaps the conflagration continues outside the frame). The sky is wholly white in an act of pacification. The policewoman walks on the road, her gaze fixed at the ground, mourning the loss. The fire has now materialized. The earthen path has become a path of turbid water. The Siamese twins, separated into firemen, traverse a scorched earth. The attempt to deal with the trauma has taken its toll, and perhaps this is only a first warning.

13. “An eminent principle set by our Sages in the Midrashic sources is the anti-historical principle ‘there is no early and late in the Torah.’ According to this exegetical rule, the entire canonical corpus, complete with all its 24 books, fuses into a unified cyclical entity whose paths are timeless and its components—reversing, making every possible and impossible encounter”—Shua Salzov, *Ich bin nicht ich bin*: in den Fusstapfen Gemäldegruppe Kahler—Lai Schnurbaer, 2001, *cat.* Buff, *Lamone Gemälden 2003-2005*, (Tel Aviv and Berlin: Gross Art Gallery and Galerie Asperger, 2005, p. 7 [Hebrew & German].

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Petach Tikva, 2009
The visual field in the series “RealityTrauma” is organized around a concrete, clear and circular center. A square, a hill, a mound, a puddle, a pool, a horse, a hole in the ground, a cavity in a dinosaur. At times the circle’s axis unites with the photograph’s geometrical focal point, at times it is deflected away from it, being centered as a depleted core, devoid of details, engulphed by the visual occurrence, and therefore channelled thereon or, alternatively, scattered therefrom. On the narrative level, there is no plot, only episodes. There is no event, only occurrences. It is a stroll, rather than a journey, a flaneur’s journal documenting the familiar, yet restless and devoid of domestic comfort. Areas of erosion and vestiges, raw materials and the backdrop of a suburban dream, backyards of agricultural implements, dusty recreational zones—all photographed with fascination and absolute, conscious control of the dosage and fine-tuning of pathos versus emptiness, in between illusion and delusion.

Ganor fuses “reality” and “trauma” into a single concept, onto which they implode without carrying with them “post” and “pre,” “hyper” and “meta”; without indicating the victim and the guilty or cause and effect. The “RealityTrauma” cycle introduces a poetic reading, while employing theoretical organization which enables quantitative weighing of the perceived reality and the trauma as a point on an imaginary axis extending between the two notions. The degree of their collapse onto one another is determined at the moment of photography and in the picture. Ganor subverts the familiar notion of the decisive moment in photography, a move which links directly to his analytical photographic explorations since the mid-1970s, combining the two axes which were concurrently present in his work. One engaged, conceptually, with the construction of semantic meaning in the visual image and with image-text relations; the other addressed the poetic-allegorical aspect, as formulated in the canonical view of modernism in photography. Ganor consolidated his assertions and assumptions in the theoretical discourse in photographic works congruent with the difference between the various discourse types. The works which accompanied the conceptual discussion tended toward staged, lucid photography which pits the verbal language against the visual language, and is accompanied by texts and captions whose meaning is crucial to the philosophical-intellectual research. The works which accompanied the disciplinary discussion were inclined toward the documentary, personal as well as social, while exploring the necessary conditions for the creation of photography, experimenting with their disruption and exploring their stability vis-à-vis technical and thematic limitations and complexities. At a certain point conceptual questions infiltrated the disciplinary explorations, and the study of the signifying nature of a general visual language focused on the specific syntax typical of the photographic medium and its imperative and instructive abilities. “RealityTrauma” combines the rational, analytical, poetic, and allegorical into a stratified dialectic expression whose visual quality undermines the distinction between documentary and staged, between event time and photography time, between pathos on the one hand, and logical construction and emptying of meaning, on the other. The realization that ethos precedes all thought, whether prosaic or existential, and a recognition of the power of randomness and chance and the importance of personal experience—all these have been present as a major axis in Ganor’s work since his early mid-1970s explorations to the later strolls in the fields of RealityTrauma.

Ganor’s vantage point does not stem from a search for the truth, but from an attempt to extract authenticity by undermining the setting (like the preparation for pulling out an unruly tooth). Going out to wander requires great intention and internal organization for a state of reception and profound observation. Impossibility is a key experience in Kafka’s writing, concisely formulated in many of his short stories. This is also the basic experience vis-à-vis the gateway of the Law intended especially for us, yet guarded by the threatening doorkeepers (“Before the Law”). Likewise, the imperial message will never reach the subject dwelling far away, for the messenger will never get through the courtyards of the hall, the countless stairways, and the entire capital city (“An Imperial Message”). The Kafkaesque impossibility has no rationale. It is paradoxical and mysterious, yet convincing. “You want the impossible, while for me the possible is impossible,” Kafka wrote to Max Brod (on January 31, 1921).

“My grandfather used to say: ‘Life is astoundingly short. To me, looking back over it, life seems so foreshortened that I scarcely understand, for instance, how a young man can decide to ride over to the next village without being afraid that—not to mention accidents—even the span of a normal happy life may fall far short of the time needed for such a journey.”

The concept “reality” is a construction made and experienced with cognitive tools. It indicates the existence of things as such (in themselves), and spans all beings, even if they are not perceived by any subject. Human thought has always been engaged in the interpretation of reality as a world of phenomena, and as part of the unique human perception. Trauma hinders cognitive analysis. It contains a certain excess which evades representation, leaving a void in consciousness from which horror arises. “At the heart of the traumatic experience there is, as LaCapra put it, a ‘thing’—some excess which evades representation, leaving an empty lacuna in the system of consciousness. Hence, the trauma is the occurrence of a terrible event whose ‘terribleness’ cannot be represented by language or by other symbolical systems.”* The prevalent inclination for a dichotomous view of the world results in the introduction of a positive space versus a negative space, and accordingly—the insight that excess generates a void, leaving

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an absence. The view eliminating polarity—from crater and mountain through pit and pile to hole and protuberance, much like the dual discussion of the essence of matter in the Theory of Relativity, the Uncertainty Principle, Gödel’s Theorem in mathematics, and other challenges to ancient concepts pertaining to basic ideas such as time, space, and consciousness—cognition grasps, but consciousness drops. One must climb the mountain, one may fall into the abyss. The Greek gods were placed on top of the Olympus, and the underworld (sheol) was lowered to oblivion (tehom ha-neshiya—the Hebrew word tehom [abyss] was teamed with neshiya—forgetfulness and death, although the biblical source [Psalms 88:12] mentions only “the land of forgetfulness”).

In The City and a Turquoise Life Buoy (Tel Aviv, 2006) 

4. Dominick LaCapra, Writing History, Writing Trauma (Baltimore: Maryland: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2001), pp. 6-11

...the city towers like a mountain which one must ascend. A woman with a baby and a child climb barefooted on a rocky slope rising from the sea to the mountain (the city). The woman is fully clothed, holding the baby in her arms, and next to them the child in wet surf shorts, a swim ring around his waist. The gazes of all three inclining that of the baby, the only one not barefooted, but rather in sandals, not stepping on the stones, but rather carried (arms) are directed at the ground, which likely hurts the feet treading upon it. They march carefully but determinedly toward the passage to the city. Within their shadow, on the ground, some of the stones glow with radiant sparkle. The crude materiality of the stones calls to mind hard clods, and the city’s towers appear like a two-dimensional cardboard backdrop. Extending across in the middle is a narrow strip of a worldly occurrence: people march, children ride bicycles, a family fans the barbecue flames—a Bakhtinian polyphony which disrupts the hierarchical order; blending together sea, sky, city, towers, and clods of earth.

“...There are reasons for the vision of history—or at least modern and, even more, postmodern culture—as traumatic, especially as a symptomatic response to a felt implication in excess and disorientation which may have to be undergone or even acted out if one is to have an experiential or empathic basis for working it through”

5. Ibid., pp. 81-82.

Birth of the Dinosaur (Rishon Le’Zion, 2010) 14

A man’s naked upper body emerges from the vagina of a dinosaur statue’s slashed throat. The bionic arm of a modern crane, traffic, construction materials, electricity poles, fences, iron stakes, and sweat, the setting locates the scene in-between Jurassic Park and wretched labor.


The belated temporality of trauma and the elusive nature of the shattering experience related to it render the distinction between structural and historical trauma problematic. The traumatizing events in historical trauma can be determined (for example, the events of the Shoah), while structural trauma (like absence) is not an event but an anxiety-producing condition of possibility related to the potential for historical traumatization. When structural trauma is reduced to, or figured as, an event, one has the genesis of myth wherein trauma is enacted in a story or narrative from which later traumas seem to derive (as in Freud’s primal crime or in the case of original sin attendant upon the Fall from Eden). Structural trauma is a universal theoretical construction which identifies the structure of trauma with the human condition and the permanent existence of irrevocable absence and distortion. The historical trauma is a concrete event, a trauma experienced by certain people, which leads to very specific results. LaCapra criticizes the reductive tendency to identify the two. In this context, he directs most of his critique at Slavey Zdbek and his idealistic version, which reduces the phenomena to an inferior embodiment of essence. He regards historical traumas as an expression of the Lacanian Real which is a traumatic element built into human reality (hence his argument that the manifestation of the traumatic real as the individual’s castration anxiety may be seen in culture in different versions of concentration camps).


Lacan’s “desire” is also defined by a lack, a gap between the appetite and the demand for recognition and love, a lack which motivates the subject to fulfill the desire in diverse ways; a vital power which sets the passion route of every subject in motion, but the desire remains forever gapped, and cannot be eliminated.


As a young man of 25, Ganor turned to explore the wide open soul from a rational scholarly stance. The points of departure for his work The Desire and Its Fulfillment (New York, 1975) were the concept of “free will” and the question whether desire may be satisfied via an existential decision outside thought. Ganor tied desire to free will, attempting to subordinate the Lacanian notion to a social-historical-institutional context, using the structure of a logical claim—a device striving to explore the behavior of individuals or phenomena from a specific field, as part of an experiment and with tools taken from another field. This system will recur and serve Ganor later on, to pit logical correctness against paradoxical ethics.

In the photographic experiment, the artist (the subject), who had always wanted (desire) to raise a French Citroen to the roof of the Empire State (New York State’s nickname) Building, conquers the peak. He fulfills his wish using his own powers (the miniature car in his pocket) as well as the means put at his disposal by the Empire (a relatively cheap elevator). In the space of desire and realization of the lack, the French car conquers the Empire. The artist has the proof for it, and it undermines the power sources of the dominator. Lacan’s desire is associated with creative subversion of authority. Jacques-Alain Miller ties this to Lacan’s assertion that it is easier to undermine an immediate, accessible authority. His subversive reading of Freud’s texts is made possible through his closeness to Lacan as his reader. Lacan prays creative subjectivity, which revives the power of symbols, makes for “negative transference,” and is required in order to generate the effect of subversion.

The Desire and Its Fulfillment (New York, 1975)

5. Ibid., p. 81-82.

6. Ibid., p. 84.


5. Dominick LaCapra, Writing History, Writing Trauma (Baltimore: Maryland: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2001), pp. 4-6


Metaphorology: A Theory of Nonconceptuality

Towards the ending of “The Garden of Forking Paths,” the erudite sinologist, Stephen Albert, describes the power of metaphors for his foreign guest, Yu Tsun (who will shortly murder him, according to one of the time-lines of the story): “To eliminate a word completely, to refer to it by means of inept phrases and obvious paraphrases, is perhaps the best way of drawing attention to it.” At the end of the story, at the

9. Ibid., p. 15.
denouement of the mystery, it turns out how acute the power of metaphor was for his own fate. He is.(...)vernal. He is murdered by agent Yu Tsun, who found no other way to convey to his operators in Berlin that Albert was the name of the city to be attacked. The series “Save as…” (1994) deals with the naive power of a waning star and the relaxation from anxiety attributed to an unknown reality and an unknown future. The photographed setting simulates the surface of another planet, but the depicted figures (the crew members who took part in the production), the objects, and the actions performed by the “extraterrestrials” are all made of earthly substances by means of soldering and gluing, much like ethnographic tools. In a parody of science fiction movies and metallic productions of invasions from other planets, the current series preserves a measure of humanity and control over the dosage of the estrangement effect to a level which calls forth compassion rather than horror, echoing Isaac Asimov’s laws of robotics (1950), whereby advanced technology is merely intended to promote humanity and the robot will not turn against its maker. Scratches and engravings from an external source, “400 mega scratches,” are grafted to the photograph, produced in a direct process—an aging process which renders the intervention in the creation of the “thing,” a verbalized (visual) image. Johan Huizinga, who studied the history of games, suggests that play and representation “are insoluble. At the same time, he emphasized that words enable the appearance of things: “The obviously existent Kantian ‘Thing’ (das Ding) is imperceptible and ineffable; it is the absence which is non-representable-in-self-representation”. Language is always constructive. “Is not every attempt at psychological understanding, whether directed toward a person or a group, already morphology, the craving to grasp a form?”

In Arthur C. Clarke’s story “History Lesson,” the last scene of all was an expanded view of its face, obviously expressing some powerful emotion. But whether it was rage, grief, defiance, resignation or some other feeling could not be guessed. The picture vanished. For a moment some lettering appeared on the screen, then it was all over. The researchers plan an in-depth study to draw all the information concealed in this testimony, but the secret of the marvelous civilization will remain unknown till the end of the film. The film they watched was Mickey Mouse, yet failing to decipher the meaning of the caption “A Walt Disney Production”

The city eastward, away from the sea, a no-man’s-land partitions between him and the city, a vacant lot, furrowed with the tracks of an ATV or some urban work vehicles. In the background there are several mounds of earth attesting, as with the mole, that something is transpiring underground as well. The time of the no-man’s-land is limited, and the presence of the man with the blower enhances the doubt as to its lot. Will this piece of land be expropriated from the nature it favors—promenade, sea and recreation, or is it being prepared for the construction of yet another tower? The man, who belongs to the forces of the sea, to nature, to another place, fosters the margins of black and white exposed aggregate—gravel forced into concrete, of the type used to pave the seaside promenade. He works on the sand, which ostensibly overflowed from the city through the no-man’s land and invaded the margins, back to the city by means of the wind. In fact, it is beach sand which wandered to the city with the wind or was discharged from construction sites to which it had previously been transported by trucks. In the passage from the seashore ("as the sand which is upon the seashore"), a biblical expression denoting multiplicity, first uttered in this form in the reference to Abraham as a blessing for multiplying following the binding of Isaac, Genesis 22: 17 to the city (Tel Aviv, the city which grew from the sand dunes, where, not far from the plot appearing in the photograph, the raffling of land parcels, well remembered from Soskin’s photograph, took place), the status of the sand (khol, wc) changes from sacred to profane (khol, wc). Order is shuffled, the city is driven away from the sea, and its symbols indicate danger. A dark shadow falls on the tower in the background and on the office building on the left. The cars in the parking lot congregate to form a dense patch, and the low-lying houses in the neighborhood behind them are swallowed by clouds and dust into the white skies. An exposition for the end of the world, and perhaps a mere end-of-day routine, like stacking up reclining chairs on the beach or “wiping” the kitchen.

In Arthur C. Clarke’s story “History Lesson,” millennia after humanity had been annihilated, a research delegation of lizard-like aliens from Venus arrives at the ice-covered planet Earth, whose goal is to decipher the ancient civilization. Among the artifacts that survived, the Venutians find a tin spool bearing a long sequence of thousands of tiny images. After cracking the technology, they create a screening device, and the delegation’s historian festively announces that they are finally about to discover what the members of this glorious race which populated planet Earth—whose wisdom was likely much higher than anything they, the aliens, may imagine—looked like. With awe they observe the two-legged figures moving frantically on screen, staring at their faces with the close-together eyes and mocking smile. The alien scientists view the experiences of life on the third planet with fascination and perplexity, surprised when the sequence of images ends, and the concluding image, closing to form a circle at the center of the screen, shows the face of the creature who was the focal point of most of the events. “The last scene of all was an expanded view of its face, obviously expressing some powerful emotion. But whether it was rage, grief, defiance, resignation or some other feeling could not be guessed. The picture vanished. For a moment some lettering appeared on the screen, then it was all over.” The researchers plan an in-depth study to draw all the information concealed in this testimony, but the secret of the marvelous civilization will remain unknown till the end of the film. The film they watched was Mickey Mouse, yet failing to decipher the meaning of the caption “A Walt Disney Production”.
in the concluding frame, they will never know that they viewed a cartoon. “For the rest of time it would symbolize the human race.”

What did the Martian Say (Ramat Hasharon, 2009) p. 108

Two figures, covered from head to toe, stand at the edge of a green field observing work performed in a distant section of the field, an elliptical tribune glaring in the background. The figures are well covered, save one palm, there are no areas of their bodies left exposed to the light through the mesh, as if they were beekeepers, sappers, scientists in a bio-tech industry or in a nuclear reactor, astronauts, or perhaps, extra-terrestrials. One of the figures holds a device which calls to mind a sophisticated detector of bombs! gold! underground movements messages from outer space! or, perhaps, it is simply a knife!, the metal disc in its rear part glows with a luster like a compact solar energy center. In the midst of this elusive décor, the tribunes in the background appear like a landing field suitable for an alien spaceship. The figures’ heads and their invisible gazes are momentarily raised from their work on the ground and directed at the giant landing pad, as if something were about to happen.

“Perhaps universal history is the history of a few metaphors: This is how Jorge Luis Borges begins his short essay ‘Pascal’s Sphere’ in the collection Other Inquisitions. Borges does not leave this dramatic assertion hanging; he backs it up with a modest attempt to demonstrate it with one chapter from that history. Pascal’s essay describes the incarnations of the sphere metaphor, which originated with the image of God, or the eternal entity, as a sphere, continued with the fateful transformation that occurred with the constitution of the new science, following which the entire universe was described as an eternal sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference nowhere,” as in Giordano Bruno’s well-known essay, and concluded with a description of Pascal’s existential experience, who, based on this metaphorical image of the universe as an eternal sphere, ‘compared our lives to those of shipwrecked men on a desert island’.

This is how Pini Ifergan begins his introduction to Hans Blumenberg’s book, subsequently elaborating on the latter’s approach, who—in contradistinction to Borges’s reflexive stance—strives to justify the systematicatization innate to the metaphor, and so formulate a solid philosophical view based on observation, which may account for man’s constant insistence on interpreting the metaphor itself just as well.

He calls this view a “Theory of Nonconceptuality” (metaphorology).

It would appear that any attempt to encapsulate and sum up Borges’s already-condensed writing is doomed to a Borgesian loop and a fussy, verbose interpretation like the one he sought to avoid in his writing, striving to deliver himself from the lingual excess of all texts.

A Molehill is a Mountain Being-in-Itself

The molehill (Mole, Poleg Nature Reserve, 2007) is shot from up close, with gaze lowered at the center of the composition. The depicted mound is not generic; it is one and it belongs to a single mole, thus emphasizing the singularity of the mole as an entity. Not different mounds for different moles, as described in the generalizing dictionary entry for “mole.” Thus, Ganor photographed the exploding watermelon (Watermelon on Jerusalem Stone, Ramat Hasharon, 1984 p. 8), and the “second generation” watermelon (a photograph of an earlier photograph he took, “Knife Check” of a watermelon, 1990), as part of a discussion of the singular versus the generic, the isolated image versus sequence and seriality. The molehill is shot from the proper direction and distance ensuring that the photographer’s shadow will not fall on it. The other elements in the composition carefully give way to it too. The footprints of a dog or some other small animal skirt the mound from the left; footprints and the track of car tires skirt it from the right. The thought, which is forthwith accompanied by a pleasant feeling, of stepping on the very center of the mound, is virtually inevitable, an experience which reconstructs the body movements and their careful direction right toward the hilltop, taking care not to slip down the slope and miss the momentum. A soft landing of the foot, while cracking the brittle cobs of earth. If the shoes are not high enough, then at best some crumbs of dry soil will slip into the shoe, provided that the sock is not too short. From here the thoughts wander off, again accompanied by a perceptible experience of stepping in other substances: bare feet destroying a semi-wet castle in the sand on the seashore; tired feet in hiking boots sinking with heavy steps into yellow dunes; the painful touch of bare feet onto pricking stones, as the one conveyed by the photograph of the family climbing from the sea to the city (The City and a Turquoise Life Buoy, Tel Aviv, 2006 p. 164); or boggy walking, there, in the fields by the mole, on a muddy path after a torrential rain. But no foot has stepped on the mound in the photograph, at least not until the moment of photography. The decisive moment of the mound deliberately misses or suspends the “decisive moment” as known from the history of photography. From Carter-Bresson, Lartigue, and others, who froze a clima in photography whose continuation is anticipated along the temporal sequence (e.g. jumping from a height or skipping over a puddle). Here, the moment is crucial and decisive to the picture, to reality; it is a mere potential energy, accentuating the sharp ability of a visual image to convey in a few elements, or perhaps only through the whole mound, that whose description will entail mounds of words. The photograph leaves the options open concerning the plot (what happened before and after), options which are ostensibly irrelevant on the existential side of the medium, yet highly pertinent in literary terms (see I Almost Saw a Snake p. 151). From the outset of his artistic career, Ganor has variously addressed the advantage of reductivity...
and immediacy of the photographic image, while enriching the exegetical potential as opposed to its reduction in verbal description.

**The Tower of Babel: Fuck the Screw—Half a Worm in an Apple**

In a 1975 series Ganor pitted a verbal language against a visual language, exploring the fluid validity and authority of the word as opposed to the absolute authoritative nature of the photographic image. In "photographed phrases," with a syntax of 2-3 "linguistic" components and the structure of logical claims, verbal concepts, such as desire (as discussed on p. 190), action, obedience (to municipal instructions, for instance; see *About Obedience and Internalization*, San Francisco, 1975 pp. 68-69) were explored. In the transition between languages, a change occurs in the meaning of words in the works, in keeping with a clear visual guidance. This is true of the screw in the photograph, which replaces the worm, encountering a half of which on the verge of the next bite of the apple may cause us to utter the synonym "fuck." The pairs and triplets ("sentences") presented in the series enable discussion of a development of affairs, of principles of order, continuity, and causality, and a contemplation of issues which may be exposed only through personal experience, without any clear goal or for the sake of some achievement other than the experience itself. A deliberate inclination develops here toward the "abuse" of language, which strives to be distinguishing and differentiating, yet becomes a prison of signs and a muddle a la the Tower of Babel, even emphasizing our being the subjects of language and of history.

The generation of the Separation, the post-deluge generation associated with the Tower of Babel episode, was doomed to a jumble of tongues and to dispersion across the face of the earth (in the language of Genesis, this refers to the entire world, to the territory on earth, to the land created, according to the first verse, on the first day). In general culture, the story is used in contexts of communication between speakers of different languages. The "Babel fish" in Douglas Adams’s *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* enables a person to understand the words of another, who speaks a different language; the translation software Babylon translates with a mouse click, and the message on the advertising poster for the film *Babel* throughout the world was encapsulated in the slogan "Listen." Behind the winding, intricate plot, and in addition to the language...
Paths, tells him this in relation to one of the letters he found in the labyrinth (which he calls "a labyrinth of symbols" and "an invisible labyrinth of time"). "Before I discovered this letter, I kept asking myself how a book could be infinite. I could not imagine any other than a cyclic volume, circular. A volume whose last page would be the same as the first and so have the possibility of continuing indefinitely. I recalled, too, the night in the middle of The Thousand and One Nights, when Queen Scheherazade, through a magical mistake on the part of her copyist, started to tell the story of The Thousand and One Nights, with the risk of again arriving at the night upon which she will relate it, and thus on to infinity."

This cyclic, circular effect, in which times and spaces are swallowed within other times and spaces as a jumble of spaces, ripens in Ganor’s work in the recent series "Reality/Trauma." The cyclical option here does not stem from an analytic investigation or a comparison between linearity and spatial hyperbole; it is exposed in situ, in direct photography. It is as if the stance proposed by his work thirty years ago—the elevation of doubt to metaphysical status—once again reverberates from the field itself, from the physical space unfolding before the camera, with the myriad temporal axes intersecting and crossing the photograph space in different directions, disrupting the unity of plot and time, and nevertheless clearing a space, creating a place. Not a single, singular place, not THE glorious, well known place. A modest, pathos-free yet grand place, because it has plenty of space and many places.


In this series, Ganor deconstructed the concept of "street photography" and explored its meanings beyond those derived from the use of "street" as a descriptive ("street photography" like "street kid"), or as indicative of the physical site (photography on the street). The photographs were taken while actively walking in the street, the photographer’s status being identical to that of the other participants in the "carnival" arena—the march in the New York street. The carnival a la Bakhtin is defined by the hackneyed everyday reality which it challenges, serving as its antithesis by opening its symbols up for renewed discussion. According to Bakhtin, the carnival is laden with ambivalent symbols which unite a polar duality of difference and disaster. Here the photographer is both participant and inspector, but he is also the generator of an event. He uses the flash as a technical aid which rations times and dictates visibility, yet it is a source of light introduced into the scene by the photographer, thereby distorting the "image of reality," the appearance of things as they are, the original lighting (whether daylight or street lights). The flash time is the time of the photograph whose contents derive from the synchronization of the flash and its intensity during the exposure; without seeking a curiosity, an anticipated scenario, or the need to document the occurrences. The field of action is a polyphonic space rife with voices and sights, and dynamics whose existence is structured, yet it is rendered a meaningful product only after photography’s measuring tools are applied to it. Photography generates the event and indicates the chances of its realization. Chance and fortuity become a photographed certainty.


Tango with a Crow (Tel Aviv/Herzliya, 2006) 18

The tango phantom, the danger threatening to transform the couples’ dance into a devil’s dance, does not lie in wait; rather, it charges from a low altitude. The crow, with fingered wings and talons folded into landing posture, makes a dramatic horizontal entrance, crossing the upright movement of the dancers and the diagonal shadows which gather on the vertical axis. With festive ritualism, the leg crossings of the dancing couples are adjusted, and the heel of the central couple is stuck exactly in the groove between the floor tiles, the picture’s axis of perfect symmetry. The rows of tiles and the elongated shadows congregate, like a Brunelleschian perspectival drawing, into a hidden vanishing point on the horizon, lower than the crow’s flight route, which will probably deviate from the symmetry axis and violate the regularity of the grid and the exact timing of the tango. The couples’ dance frantically merges with the prancing of the shadows on the checkerboard floor and the cloud counterpoint. A perfect set, festive décor, apt lighting, and coordinated steps, but there are no faces in this dance floor event. The only figures whose faces are discernible are scattered at the edges of the floor, their gazes either straying or lowered.

Uroboros: The Serpent Holding its Tail in its Mouth

Family exemplifies a concept which photography cannot convey on the same level of accuracy and validity as the word. Ramat Hasharon 1984. The photographic arena is the house and its immediate surroundings within a 100-meter radius. A modern Nikon pocket camera, automatic flash, automatic focus—"automatic digestion," as Ganor calls it—as opposed to the state-of-the-art, heavy apparatus he operated at the time in his capacity as a professional photographer. Here, the limited physical space is documented by the limited tools of an amateur photographer. "The camera shoots by itself what is worthy of being photographed in order to describe the past in the future; it replaces what once was the family memory, the child's 'spoken subject'" (Ganor following Lacan’s notion). Before one’s eyes, before the camera, the miracle of a nuclear family takes place. Tamara was already born. The private space changes both physically and mentally. The domestic sphere and the optical setting are supplemented with toys, fixtures, garden chairs. With a compact pocket camera, the miracle is documented as a commemorative site. The practice of photography is daily, taking part in existence. The familiar domestic moment becomes threatening and terrible. An outsider has invaded the domestic yard, an "other" who does not belong to the political discourse; one who is not the disadvantaged, underprivileged, the minority, or the victim. An "other" who is repressed, the uncanny.

The Freudian uncanny originates in the violation and disruption of the familiar order to the extent that the distinction between animate and inanimate is blurred, and the qualification of objects; machines, stones, and images to imprint us with live, convincing impressions. Through his analysis of ETA Hoffmann’s "The Sandman," who tears out children’s eyes, Freud describes the fear of blindness as the worst threat (replacing even castration anxiety). Blinding or dullness of the gaze, as a result of the excises accompanying images and their fidgety quality, might likewise dazzle. The Document about the Crocodile (from the series “Documents,” 1990 90), as elaborated below on p. 178 portray a sleeping baby (Uriya, Ganor’s son); the boundless sweetness and naiveté on his face are interrupted by a scratch crossing the sleeping eye. As part of the “document” construction, the photograph was supplemented with the tail of a crocodile tangential to the eye and the scratch, a sentence connoting the
Urban myth of sewer alligators (the “water conduits” allude to the tear ducts), and deep scratches on the photograph.

Crocodile Fame (Dabush Beach, Herzliya/Tel Aviv Studio, 1985) " from the series “Image Not Photo” (1985). Misleading lighting. A strong source of light from one direction blindly illuminates a little girl (Tamara) crowned with (an undershirt bearing the logo of the television series Fame). In front of her, in the foreground (separating Tamara from her photographer father), a crocodile crosses the frame. The sky is black and impervious, the sea is less black, and a black, geometrical patch—perhaps the shadow of one of the falls—falls on the sand, which is strewn, like the surface of the moon, with dark shadow patches resulting from the contrasting low-angled lighting. The next photograph (Crocodile in Its Garden, Ramat Hasharon/Tel Aviv Studio, 1985 " ) portrays a wild thicket with fruit trees, a lush succulent, and multiple cacti—tall, fleshy, and jagged like a crocodile. In the foreground, a single dark stem of a toothed cactus or alternatively the erect tail of a crocodile. The sky is strangely colored in white-gray, and near-transparent stains, reluctant to be delimited within a contour, vaguely call to mind clouds seen through a softening filter. The next photograph (Snake in Its Garden, Ramat Hasharon, 1985 " ) shows a dense hedge and vine tendrils which wriggle in different directions. In the foreground, a wild snake twists into an S shape, jumping out from or above the hedge toward the camera and the photographer, toward the house. An all too bright white sky and a square shadow falling on it expose the illusion of the overhead artificial covering (a light-colored shade or a softening screen), as in the concluding scene of The Truman Show.

In the 1980s, the discourse of photography focused on insights concerning the photographic product as analogous to a physical reality. Fascinating critical theory was written around this aspect of indexical photography, whose representatives included Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, John Berger, and Rosalind Krauss. Discussion of the concept of “reality” was ostensibly facilitated when space was cleared for writing about a physical reality, as obtained via photography. The verbal descriptions above (the descriptions of the works) fall into the web spread by Ganor in his work, as a strategy which demands lingering and profound observation and contemplation of the concepts themselves, even the most commonplace, and their affinities with their meanings. The descriptions of the pictures here reflect the illustrative trap generated by a photograph which may be verbalized, so to speak. Garry Winogrand’s well-known statement, “A photograph is the illusion of a literal description of how the camera ‘saw’ a piece of time and space;” is put into practice here. The photography arenas (in both processes) contain symbolic elements whose origin we do not usually contemplate, and whose existence we never doubt. What is presented in the picture is not what was in front of the lens, but rather what was drafted in yet another photographic process. The certainty of Winogrand’s phrase is undermined. Ganor thus reformulates it: “A photograph is an object which misleads...” A photograph is the illusion of a literal description of how the camera ‘saw’ a piece of time and space;” is put into practice here. The photography arenas (in both processes) contain symbolic elements whose origin we do not usually contemplate, and whose existence we never doubt. What is presented in the picture is not what was in front of the lens, but rather what was drafted in yet another photographic process. The certainty of Winogrand’s phrase is undermined. Ganor thus reformulates it: “A photograph is an object which misleads...” A photograph is an object which misleads its beholder, setting a trap for him, as though it can be verbalized, put into words.” The final picture portrays the things that were in front of the lens in the second (additive) process. One of them is the first photograph. The analytical confrontation of the credibility of the photographic representation turns to construction of a hybrid image, shaking, in addition to the deception of the pictorial report, also the predatory hold of the phoebe. Once again, the cyclical principle and the hypothetical possibility of infinite photographs within photographs, times within times, arise, like a labyrinth of mirrors, like time tunnels, like Möbius strips, like the snake which swallows its own tail, the Uroboros.

Denial of Light: Night of Day

A series of works from 1985-1986 presents yet another phase in the violation of the instructions of standard photography. Ganor photographed the series in Tel Aviv, which was, for him, a return to the capabilities and register of early 19th century photographic materials introduced a deliberate difficulty to the planning of
the frame due to its darkening in the eyepiece window. The low sensitivity required longer exposure, like the duration of exposure in the medium's early days and as in nocturnal photography. The works were taken on the Tel Aviv beach during the day, and the camera was mounted on a tripod so that the static details in the landscape would not be smeared with blurred motion, but only those bodies whose movement is quick enough in relation to the exposure. Due to the physical amount of light, the result was that of photography in midday light with a perceived quality (texture and the smearing of movement) of night shots and an echo of early photography. With a picturesque appearance, the city resembled an oasis undergoing urbanization. The bright daylight does not guarantee a credible document. It does not report, on the very basic level (light), the time and place, nor does it allow the construction of a concrete event.

Espionage Mission (Tel Aviv, 2008) + \( \sum \pi \) combines two times. The water time which quickly, sharply, and clearly freezes the water rising from the floor, and the prolonged people time, directed at the complex beyond the fountain, crossed by two strange-looking men. The poetics of neglect, tin shanty patches, peeling walls, and some weeds—the blend which somewhat exhausted the “backyard” landscapes in Israeli photography in the past decade—takes a turn toward Italian Neo-Realism. “Two spies, possibly from the Soviet Union, perhaps from Bosnia and Herzegovina, cross the local Fontana di Trevi compound,” was Ganor’s description of the photograph from the Tel Aviv Port. “Too bad this city has no circus / Too bad it has no sword swallower, no elephants, no dragons” but one minute from a secret mission may have nevertheless been caught in the lens. Against a peeling gray-brown urban backdrop, the gray-brown suits of a pair of men, out of time and out of place, blend in. The collar and sleeve-ends of the young man who stares at the camera glow in vivid azure through a dark jacket, possibly preceding a punch-line to an espionage affair whose plot wanders from the Soviet Union to the Yarkon estuary, and from there to prime-time.

Procedure of a Photography Foretold

“Very Untitled” 1990. Charged symbols are emptied of their original meaning. A weight-lifter on a matchbox, a silvery fork, and a donkey carved in olive wood (Matchbox Tough Guy, Toothless Fork, Earless Donkey from Olive Wood, Tel Aviv Studio, 1990 + \( \sum \pi \)). In a large format (4x5 in.) with high capacity for detail registration, they are photographed with a deliberate distortion of the bellows of a camera, the part connecting the lens to the back of the camera, on which the film is placed. The disruption violates the “Scheimpflug principle” on which a method for correcting perspective distortion in optical devices relies, when the lens plane is not parallel to the image plane. Due to the insertion of objects into the bellows, the optical system was distorted, and the missed result is depicted with maximum resolution. Beyond their disrupted visual recording, the photographed objects reflect another unrealized potential inherent in their symbolic power. The tough guy is stuck in the weight-lifting phase prior to the jerk, and the matches scattered in the box underneath him ridicule all contemplation of physical strength or muscle mass. The silver fork lost its teeth due to the photographic conditions and the distortion of the device, and it is perpetuated as a purposeless object. The donkey is missing an ear, and it carries with it nothing of the pride of the olive tree that has been standing in the field for centuries, and in symbol dictionaries of grand cultures—for millennia. Its wood was carved not in the image of the Crucifix, to hang on one’s chest close to the heart or on the wall as a sign of faith, torments, or salvation, but as a little ornament (a donkey which is both deaf and stubborn), to place on a chest-of-drawers.

“Documents” (1990) + \( \sum \pi \). Documents are intended to enhance a potential of communication, which should elucidate and order the contents they represent. They have an agreed-upon format, they contain texts and illustrations, they embed contracts and agreements about certain commitments. By their very existence, they prove the existence of other things. (Unless we assume a tautological document which refers only to itself, like Borges’s Scheherazade, “Borges and I” and other loops among his writings). In the series “Documents” Ganor strove to create photographs via a predetermined procedure, in direct continuation of the previous series, “Very Untitled.” The document preparation was performed by a clear method, whose implementation also examined its inner realms and validity—its ability to produce another document. The work formula included: direct, simple, everyday photography in 35mm landscape format, another shot of a staged story in a square format, and selection of an element from it: Re-photography of the first photograph with the chosen element from the second photograph, and a transition to a new square format, as well as exposure of the trick: the addition of an ordering text originating in an urban myth or a personal dream, submitting the text to translation into English and then into Japanese. The work formula ensures the use of unreliable sources of information, their composition via processes of adaptation and estrangement, and use of means which the artist cannot necessarily control or judge. The resulting documents are supposedly dubious, devoid of all real external authority.

A Mountain Being-in-Itself (1990) \( + \sum \pi \). In reference to Jung’s assertion that man symbolizes in a natural, unintentional manner, the works in the series undermine the customary method of symbolization, which is often based on a temporary or accidental link between items. The use of the expression “I symbolize” as a text incorporated in the works attests to the ambivalent representation paradox of the verb to symbolize in Hebrew, a language which does not distinguish between its active and its reflexive meanings. (“I symbolize” in the active sense—I create a symbol which is not necessarily tied to me, or “I symbolize” in the reflexive sense, which was supposed to be formulated as “I am being symbolized,” namely, I as a symbol). The three works in the series contain “I symbolize” declarations, but they are incongruous with the (unsaid) declaration of the series (what the series symbolizes), and with the added title and its tangential text: “A Mountain Being-in-Itself” (addressing the multiple names of Mt. Everest and the stories associated with it). The declarations “I Symbolize a Pita Hole,” “I Symbolize a High Heel Sneakerski Shoe,” and “I Symbolize Crushed Olives” appear as captions in three languages within the works. The photographed objects are akin to an “inventory” of the items in the declarative sentence (denotation) and additions which facilitate the syntactic construction of the sentence, like conjunctions and adjectives, yet these charge the sentence with added significations (connotations).

The difference between a “signifier of something” and a “signifier to something” serves Eric Santner in his book On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on...
Freud and Rosenzweig in approaching the important distinction between a cognitive inscription and an existential/real inscription in the realm of social relations. Through the image of the hieroglyphs, cited by Lacan as an example that the signifier may be designated (namely, lose what it signifies, without losing its power to signify to). Santner arrives at the modern, "perhaps even Kafka’s," notion of revelation. (In digital photography, the signifier is a mathematical code devoid of visual content, without intentional, pre-programmed interpretation.) "At any rate, it was precisely apropos of the status of revelation in Kafka’s work that Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem discussed the phenomenon of the designated signifier, this peculiar surplus of address over meaning—of, to put it awkwardly, the ‘what’ of meaning over the ‘what it is’—so central to Kafka’s universe. 22" Santner develops this excess of validity over significance (the "nothingness of revelation," as Scholem put it in a letter to Walter Benjamin)—which is the thing forever fought by Kafka’s protagonists—as animation, which, in a sense, infuses life into matter, but not in the form of faith or meaning. In an expressive manner which has a revolatory force, which Scholem described as validity without meaning (Santner relies on Slavoj Žižek’s formulation of the mysterious interpellations which the Kafkaesque subject receives from a bureaucratic entity (Law, Castle). It is an interpellation without identification, which leaves the Kafkaesque subject desperately seeking a trait with which to identify. 18 In psychoanalytical terms, the persistence of validity without meaning attests to a trauma (a breakdown in meaning) which has left traces in the mind, hence the significance of fantasy grows. Fantasy organizes and binds this surplus (of validity over significance) into a schema that distorts the shape of our universe. Paradoxically, however, it sustains the sense of consistency, grounding a notion of a balanced Universe. It is an idiosyncratic excess which sustains (rather than deranges) every notion of cosmic order (Santnar via Žižek, p. 40). Thereby we place ourselves "out of this world" or at the "end of the world," and therefore it also serves as a means of adaptation to it. Santner begins his book with a quote from Robert Walser’s short story, "The End of the World." By linking it to Kafka, he sets out to indicate a major theme in the doctrines of Freud and Rosenzweig. "The problem is that of inhabiting the midst, the middle of life." The girl in Walser’s story has no parents, no family, home, or belonging whatsoever; she decides to go out and seek the end of the world—a journey to the outer limits of the space of human habitation. She walks for days and nights, disregarding natural phenomena, people, fear, darkness, or hunger. Behind everything, at the very end—she thought she would find it. At first, she imagines the end of the world as a tall wall, then as a deep abyss, a green meadow, a lake, a sea of pleasure, as nothing or as something whose nature she did not know. For sixteen years the girl walked across lakes, plains, and mountains, but did not reach the end of the world, and seemed to be very far from it. One day she came upon a farmer, who knew a nearby farmhouse called ‘End of the World,’ and he told her it was half an hour away. Exhausted from her journey, the girl finally arrived at the ‘End of the World’ and stayed to live with the farmers. She worked diligently and served them faithfully. She was soon liked by everyone, and never did the child run off again, for it felt at home. 19"

In the chapter "Toward an Ethics of Singularity" Santner proposes an interesting link between this unique excess (of validity over significance) and Roland Barthes’s distinction between the studium and punctum of a photograph. Santner ties the idiosyncratic quality which Rosenzweig calls, "offhand"—a gap in the series of identifications that constitute the self. Borrowing the discourse of the infinitesimal calculus, he refers to it as a differential—putting it to Scholem’s discussion of Kafka with regard to the persistence of validity without meaning. The punctum brings to consciousness a non-symbolizable surplus within an otherwise intelligible reality. "When it emerges from the picture, we are touched by a remainder, an excess left from our reading of the studium."

The paradoxical spectacle of symbolization in “Documents” combines the intricate, cyclical principle, allusions and the simplification of popular myths and the history of photography to “zero degree” and the inevitable struggles of translation and interpretation. 1 Symbolizes a High Heel SnakeSkin Shoe "In the image of the hieroglyphs, Santner makes an interpretation with a turn to the original scene, the temptation and the punishment. The serpent that tempted the woman was punished with the loss of his legs and was doomed to crawl on its belly, but its punishment becomes the woman’s means of seduction, as she elevates herself on snakekin stilettos. Once again, the serpent is bound with temptation, but the photograph portrays a crocodile (which, according to some readings, is the ancient legged pre-sin serpent), and the woman is represented by a blonde wig. It is a takeoff on a Helmut Newton photograph, an ironic association between his fetishistic approach in fashion photography and women’s shoe fetish, and an association of the fetish not only with modern temptation, but way back to the original temptation. 1 Symbolizes Crushed Olives " “It is based on the idea of a carved souvenir: It is based on a story by Leopold Krakauer whereby the olive tree prefers to be burnt in the field rather than be transformed into a carved icon. 1 Symbolizes a Pota Hole. 18 “It is based on the fateful selling method, whereby one pays for the pota bread, which may be filled as the customer chooses. The return is, in fact, realized through utilization of the hole. The pita cavity, ostensibly enabling endless use, is reduced and becomes finite upon biting into it; a hollow promise whose realization consumes it. A countdown which also ratifies the time of the pact between the bride and the groom represented by the plastic statuette in the photograph, standing behind a stack of pitas packed in a plastic bag, as an alternative for their place on the iced peak of a wedding cake."

The use of the word “cavity” (khalal) rather than “hole” obviously alludes to the word’s other meaning as dead, fallen, as well as to its definition as cosmic space. According to Baudrillard, reality has fallen victim to the perfect simulacra, the simulation devoid of a real reference, hyperreality. "It is as if the operation of the virtual dimension were to bring the history of the world to an end in an instant." Baudrillard summarized Arthur C. Clarke’s short story “The Nine Billion Names of God” (1953) which he cited as an example of what he called the Perfect Crime—the murder of the Real. 20 Like God, reality too has many names, diverse perceptions and complex interpretations, and its conceptualization has preoccupied philosophy, the sciences, and the arts from time immemorial. The use of the term “reality” in Hebrew alludes to the television genre, one of whose popular versions, Big Brother, features a combination of a (direct, unstagetized, unmediated) “real world” and a “Providence,” a type of divinity, embodied in the figure of the production, rating, and the audience.

In Clarke’s story, Tibetan monks somewhere in the Himalayas have exerted themselves for several centuries to compile a list containing all the possible names of
the Supreme Being. Their list will take about fifteen thousand years to complete, and, according to their belief, when the task is completed, the world will end. In order to hasten the process, the lama commissions a computer from IBM which will calculate and print the name list faster (the real names are comprised, they believe, of nine billion possible combinations of the alphabet characters). After a month of incessant work the task is completed and the two technicians who were entrusted with it climb down from the mountain at nightfall. On the way, one of them tells the other that he had asked the lama what they will do when the task is done, but the lama avoided giving him an answer. At that moment the two notice the stars in the sky going out one by one...
RealityTrauma
(part II)

All the works in the exhibition: digital color prints, 135x202 cm
The City and a Turquoise Life Buoy, Tel Aviv, 2006
RealityTrauma
RealityTrauma
(part II)
Early Works
“I almost saw a snake” is a sentence we used in conversations in the studio when we talked about a missed opportunity, about the closeness of almost, and about what had prevented us (Yoav Chanan, who was my assistant at the time, suggested that this sentence sums up existence).

This sentence gave rise to one work at the beginning of the 1990s, but it remained an unsolved issue, and I returned to it recently. This time, however, the snake was almost digitally present. It entered the work in order to relieve the semantic tension of the sentence.

The initial point of departure was that the work contains a type of loss of direction by the use of language which is syntactically correct, but produces unease in relation to the meanings within it. Thought and speech lose out, since it is impossible not to think logically with logical thinking tools.

In the work there is a frontal clash between the depicted world and the man who thinks about the world. Wittgenstein may come to our rescue here. “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.”

Brain Surgery with Fire, Boston, 1994

Communication Man with Fire, Boston, 1994
A late reflection on works from the series “Aging Technology,” 1996

André Breton “was the first to perceive the revolutionary energies that appear in ‘the outmoded’ in the first iron constructions, the first factory buildings, the earliest photos, the objects that have begun to be extinct, grand pianos, the dresses of five years ago, fashionable restaurants when the vogue has begun to ebb from them.”


To simulate fire is a Promethean feat, as if Prometheus transmitted the fire anew inside a hollow fennel stalk.

Technology indeed grows outdated. Walter Benjamin masterfully described the outmoded, which is the law of merchandise production; it releases the object that grows obsolete from the grasp of usefulness, and enables it to appear in a new light, which reveals, perhaps, the hollow promise of modern technology.
Other people can be manipulated, but not me

Other People can be Manipulated but Not Me, Petach Tikva, 1994
1. A robot may not injure a human being, or through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the human's commands, so long as they do not conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence, as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

—Isaac Asimov, *I, Robot*

The Zeroth Law which precedes the three others and was added later in Asimov's book *Robots and Empire*:

"A robot may not harm humanity, or by its inaction allow for humanity to be harmed."

The three original laws change accordingly, in order to conflict with the Zeroth Law.

Technology, from the dawn of its poetic existence as an artificial act of man, and not the metaphor of God, was not for a moment bothered by Nature's existence or the self-elevation of Creation. Nonetheless, it aroused the hostility of envious man, afraid of the unknown, of what was inconceivable and aroused mixed emotions among people.

The following is a partial list of fears: Fear of the stranger, which underlies an overall hostility of the majority of prejudices and stereotypes; fear of the loss of control; fear of dependence; fear that the tasks placed on machines will not "free man for humane and enlightened activity;" but will lead him to illness and degeneration (fear of robots); fear of knowing too much, fear of the Prometheus struggle; *Prometheus* had compassion for man and sought to give him fire; thus in the end man received Pandora, and a suffering-filled struggle to free the wind from its chains was set in motion.

A late reflection on works from the series "Save as..." 1994

[Image of a robot]

1994, *Save as...*, Petach Tikva, 1994

The appended text discusses the numerous names of Mt. Everest and the people associated with it.

Mount Chomolungma* belongs to the range of Himalayan mountains between Tibet and Nepal. That same mountain is called in India ‘Gaurishankar,’ but a close examination of the dual names reveals that from the geographical standpoint, they are, in fact, two separate mountains, about 60 km distant from each other, and they differ considerably in the altitude of their summits.

Mount Chomolungma is named after the mother goddess of the earth, and experts assert that it is the tallest mountain on the face of the earth—8,848 meters high! If this is so, then its summit is The summit, even though in general it is hidden from view above the abundance of cloud enveloping the mountain. Experts believe that the mountain being-in-itself is indifferent to its numerous achievements.

Sir George, a British engineer and geography expert, determined the position and altitude of the mountain with great precision and skill. It would not be going too far to assume that the fate of both the mountain and Sir George were influenced by their mutual encounter.

For decades, mountaineers persisted in their stubborn attempts to scale the cliffs and glaciers of the Chomolungmas in order to reach the summit, and failed. Some consolation was obtained by means of the black-and-white quality photos of the mountain, its summit and environment. Perhaps this is deriving from the main point, and perhaps an unnecessary reference—but for the sake of clarity we should point out the climbers’ devotion to and justification of their mission. And this is their testimony: “Because it’s there.”

In the end, the mission was crowned a success. With the coincidence of a lottery win, on 29 May 1953, the birthday of Queen Elizabeth II, Edmund Percival Hillary—a New Zealand mountaineer and discoverer, a farmer’s son who studied law, managed his father’s farm, was a bee-keeper, as well as a WWII pilot—reached the summit, and was longed.

For the sake of scientific truth, whose value here is only instrumental, we should also mention the name of his guide, the Sherpa Tensing Norbu, who perhaps knew the way. Seven years elapsed before Hillary returned to the Himalayas and searched in vain for the Asimilable Snowman.

In order to maintain a semblance of updating, it should be noted that following space research, and mainly after the American moon landing, the mountain’s status has undergone a great devaluation.

*Other names for the Everest are Sagarmatha in Nepal, Chomolungma or Qomolangma in Tibet, Qomolungma Feng in China.
A late reflection on video images from the exhibition catalogue Life Size, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 1990

The overall attitude to photography, as a view of or a window onto reality, is founded on a logocentric concept, from the commonly-held assumption that there is an independent “truth” which precedes representation. Jacques Derrida is critical of this view. He describes it as a “prejudice,” “a metaphysics of presence.” This metaphysics tends to identify basic philosophical concepts, such as “truth,” “reality,” and “existence,” in terms of “presence,” “substance,” “identity,” and “source,” while almost entirely ignoring the vital role played in every definition or possible understanding of these concepts by the “absence” and the “difference.”
The Document about the Goose, Tel Aviv Studio, 1990
令や水陸という水陸を通って帰り来た生き物。もっとも、予知できなかっ
たことではないが・・・

Spraying in waterways has become a fact, even if partially unforeseen

This group of works points at the pre-known failure to create, by means of photography, a document which will be, in essence, a fact rather than an opinion. Even since the term “point of view” came to be, at best, the name of a leading TV program, the name of the Israeli Opinions Association web portal, the name of a film production company, or the name of an album—it totally disintegrated and became a dead metaphor, like “the foot of the mountain.”

Photography is necessarily a medium that creates a deconstructive event. As an analytical medium, it is designed to create opinions, to delve beneath the foundations of the visible with tools of apparent sight.

Documents, by their very nature, were designed to create communication that will clarify the process of the things they represent and their content. They are wrapped in some system, and contain text and diagrams or photographs.

Documents contain contracts and various underpinnings, development processes, and the huts in possibility to keep track of them. By their very existence, they furnish proof of the implementation and the order of things.

Obviously, documents depend on some kind of understanding of the document creator’s world, and embed the intention to allow another to study them. The preparation of documents is effected by a clear system which examines, by its use, its inner spaces and its potential to progress towards the creation of yet another document.

This is the formula: a simple rectangular photo that represents everyday existence, acquires a new, square format by means of another object—a device that lays itself bare—after the addition of an orderly Hebrew text connected with an urban legend or some personal dream. It is translated into English, a translation that I can judge, and afterwards into Japanese, a translation which I accept.

The second story is about the goose that was fattened and fell ill, transmitting its disease to the food.
Earless Donkey from Olive Wood, Tel Aviv Studio, 1990

Toothless Fork, Tel Aviv Studio, 1990
Describing Krakauer’s first encounter with the olive trees and crucifix figure in the Old City of Jerusalem’s alleys of 1925, Dan Dothan writes: “Jerusalem is a type of commandment, thought Krakauer, his hands traveling across piles of crosses carved from olive wood. Some of them glittered as if they had been dipped in olive oil; others were faded and unfinished. Christ’s figure was carved with a primitive hand lacking skill, or possibly love, by local artisans who drew their Christian aesthetic from distant sources, although they were born in the land of Jesus. The crucifixes he saw were bad imitations of their European counterparts. The only local element about these imitations was the olive wood, and Krakauer knew that an olive tree would rather be burnt in the field where it stood for centuries than be dwarfed to the level of a statuette sold for pennies to pilgrims and tourists so they can have something holy to take back home. The olive trees were the first thing that struck Krakauer in Palestine. Now, in their stricken, distorted condition in the stall, their humiliation was hard to bear.”


“And the custom of the priests with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest’s servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand, and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook brought up the priest took therewith. So they did unto all the Israelites that came thither in Shiloh.”

1 Samuel 2: 13-14 (KJV)
I Carry No Arms, Tel Aviv Studio, 1989

I Packed By Myself, Tel Aviv Studio, 1989
A late reflection on works from the series “Flight Security,” 1989

“I fly from here to a part of the world where the people have only indefinite information, or none at all, about the possibility of flying. I tell them I have just flown there from. They ask me if I might be mistaken. — They have obviously a false impression of how the thing happens. (If I were packed up in a box it would be possible for me to be mistaken about the way I have travelled). If I simply tell them that I can’t be mistaken, that won’t perhaps convince them, but it will if I describe the actual procedure to them. Then they will certainly not bring the possibility of a mistake into the question. But for all that—even if they trust me—they might believe I had been dreaming or that magic had made me imagine it.”

Snake in Its Garden, Ramat Hasharon, 1985

Crocodile in Its Garden, Ramat Hasharon/Tel Aviv Studio, 1985
In the course of my photographic activities I generally spin positive three-dimensional spiderwebs which enable pause and observation, without being stuck, like the lull that comes while solving a crossword puzzle.

One may talk about concrete photography, but the attempt to conceptualize a photograph is a desperate attempt to create a true explanation between the sense of the concept and the concept itself. The notion of Reality, in its basic and instrumental usage, is associated with most of the questions a person asks himself each day, until no choice remains but to complicate it and to pound it very thin, to create cracks in order that the concept should slide from them or implode on itself. The unicorn has an unmistakable existence. In an average room, everyone knows what it is. To grasp such concepts as “reality,” “existence,” and “truth,” and to distinguish between them, requires either a great mental effort, or ejection and gentle parachute landing.
Walking Shadows, Tel Aviv Beach, 1985
Sea Dog, Tel Aviv Beach, 1985

Beach Bus, Tel Aviv Beach, 1985

Beach Hills, Tel Aviv Beach, 1985

Oasis, Nève Avivim Neighborhood, 1985
Couple with Camera, Tel Aviv Promenade, 1985

Man on a Surfboat, Tel Aviv Beach, 1985
After a long spell of photography in an area circumscribed by walls, courtyard and neighborhood fences, the need awoke in me to go out, for a photographic wandering.

Caspar David Friedrich’s *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (‘The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog’) seems to be an interesting option when viewed from outside time. Can one convey to the observer the experience of the sublimities and thrilling experiences of the Tel Aviv seashore? Does the term “unique soul” retain its validity? At the same time, I carry on a parallel activity in the field of merchandise and publicity. The professional photographic tools serve a goal outside my interests, outside my artistic activity, within a giant system of economics and media that pushes the concrete, the everyday, the signified aside. The place of the signifiers rises, and the economic world enables the creation of simulacrum bubbles of money signifiers of an exceptional scope.
Watermelon on Jerusalem Stone, Ramat Hasharon, 1984
Tamara Ofra, San Francisco, 1983

Elephant Slide, Ramat Hasharon, 1984
Three Chicken’s Legs and a Knife, Ramat Hasharon, 1984

Tamara on a Window, Ramat Hasharon, 1984
A late reflection on works from 1985 (from an exhibition at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, curator: Micha Bar-Am)

In his essay “The Uncanny,” Freud endeavors to shed light on the source of the phenomenon of the “uncanny” — the known and familiar, which nevertheless provokes anxiety. The psychological explanation for this, according to Freud, is the repression of frightening contents hints of whose existence, in the course of unexpected encounters in reality, invoke the threat. Freud exemplifies the phenomenon by reference to his and others’ daily experiences, to literature, and to anthropological, historical, and psychological studies.


Home photographs attempt to trace in good time the steps of “the doll Olympia” and the plans of the “Sandman” in the corners of the house and in the yards, and to trace them. The photographs, which equally flood “the canny and the uncanny,” “what which was supposed to have been hidden, but which was revealed” are, by their very presence, a kind of a “secret revealed.” Being precedes consciousness, “harmful” (das Unheimliche) and “unharmful” (das Heimliche). Together they merge two contrasting significances which are compressed into a single notion—the familiar and repressed.
If we consider the concept of absolute and single-valued reality as a central characteristic of modern perceptions, then in contrast, post-modernist perceptions present the theory of the game. The existence of an absolute reality signifies a single system of laws and patterns that is equally valid in all places and at all times. Game theory, on the other hand, postulates a basic distinction between interior and exterior of the game. Within the game space, laws and patterns can be coherent and rigid, although not necessarily so, and the involvement of the human player can be full and sweeping. However, from the outside "it is only a game," one of countless possible games each with its own laws. Game theory thus allows for the adoption of different and even contradictory law systems, which can all be valid, each one in the context of another game. The one who determines which of them is relevant at any given time is the human player, who can choose this or that context from among those which are accessible to him."

Yoav Ben-Dov, "Reality as a Multi-Layered Game in the Film 'eXistenZ' , " in Haim Calev (ed.), Postmodernism in the Cinema (Tel Aviv: Optimus, 2010), pp. 93-122 [Hebrew].

Physicist, Niels Bohr, formulated the principle of "complementarity" whereby the human capacity for description is not sufficient to encompass the reality of the physical object in its entirety, "as it really is." Consequently, varied physical descriptions (e.g. of the particle and the wave) are types of games in which each has its own laws. From the moment the choice has been made on a given experimental context, there are set and clear "game laws" within whose framework the object has to be described. But from the outset, the human observer is the one who selects this or that experimental context, and his choice is what determines which laws of the game are used—for example, particle language or wave language—relevant to the description of reality from the standpoint of the electron. The "quantum observer" is thus faced with the same situation as the postmodernist player. There is no single and absolute system of laws, and therefore one may choose, at any given moment, from among varied and contrasting game law systems. But once the choice is made, one must accept the laws of the specific game and adhere to them as if they were the authentic and exact description of reality.
Pink Lady, New York, 1979
Mikhail Bakhtin occasionally uses the term ‘actual chronotope.’ What does he mean by that term? Possibly, that in ‘actual’ reality people live at home, go out to the city square, stroll in the streets, drive along the roads, sail the sea, dine in restaurants, stay in hotels, stroll in the orchard, work in the office, pray in a synagogue, immigrate to Israel, emigrate to the Diaspora, and so forth. Each of these places establishes a style of speech and behavior: a person feels and acts differently in nature and in the city streets; the speech of a person addressing a mass crowd in a square differs from that of a person whispering in the ears of his beloved, and so on. The roles and patterns of behavior which a person adopts change from place to place. The styles of behavior, the styles of social interaction, unfold in accordance with the ‘actual (time-space) chronotopes.’ This is the place to recall the expression coined by Bakhtin, ‘the co-being of being.’

The mass media of our day and the development of public transportation, have transformed people’s sense of space and stretched the ‘actual chronotopes’ of daily life to limits unknown to previous generations. In a sense, a person of our day can be present in different places at one and the same time, and his abilities of communication and information exchange are immeasurably superior to those of previous generations.

Place is a clearly visible point in which invisible systems of power and government, obligations and habits, intersect. According to Barry Sandywell, they are the ‘social frames which mediate between historical experience and individual experience, forms which are enshrined in the collective narratives of the governing institutions, systems that embrace whole fields of social activity (customs, law, religion, science, mythology, etc.).’ Foucault’s ‘panopticon’ is one example of an ‘actual chronotope.’

Helena Rimon, “Mikhail Bakhtin’s Time and Place,” in: Mikhail Bakhtin, Forms of Time and Chronotopes in the Novel (Tel Aviv & Beer Sheva: Dvir & Heksherim—The Research Institute for Jewish and Israeli Literature and Culture, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2007), pp. 286-287 [Hebrew]
2. a small car

how to park correctly in san francisco
1. a big car
In San Francisco, the city where I studied, the instruction of the authorities was written centering the car between the signs on the left and right. The individual's dependence on the arrangements of authorities prompted me to create signs of a notional school for parking, a fundamental exercise of a model for implementing authoritarian arrangements of society.

As in the stage of the concrete operations according to Piaget, taking place at the age of 7, abilities such as understanding Transitivity are acquired, but abstract thinking is still weak. At this stage, tasks relating to proportion are still found to be particularly difficult, and the learning model is designed for the sake of understanding this.
2. It cost me $1.70 to take the elevator.

1. I always wanted to take a car up the Empire State building.
As a young man of 25, Ganor turned to explore the wide open soul from a rational scholarly stance. The points of departure for his work The Desire and Its Fulfillment (New York, 1975) were the concept of “free will” and the question whether desire may be satisfied via an existential decision outside thought. Ganor tied desire to free will, attempting to subordinate the Lacanian notion to a social-historical-institutional context, using the structure of a logical claim—a device striving to explore the behavior of individuals or phenomena from a specific field, as part of an experiment and with tools taken from another field. This system will recur and serve Ganor later on, to pit logical correctness against paradoxical ethics.

In the photographic experiment, the artist (the subject), who had always wanted (desire) to raise a French Citroen to the roof of the Empire State (New York State’s nickname) Building, conquers the peak. He fulfills his wish using his own powers (the miniature car in his pocket) as well as the means put at his disposal by the Empire (a relatively cheap elevator). In the space of desire and realization of the lack, the French car conquers the Empire. The artist has the proof for it, and it undermines the power sources of the dominator.

See p. 190 in this catalogue.
2. in it i found a screw

1. i bit into an apple
A late reflection on works from 1975

Am I speaking about an event that occurred, or am I creating it, capturing a picture, making a picture; where am I in all this: present at the scene, documenting, manufacturing, creating, engaged in the medium called photography; what are the associations with the great field known as Art; where is the statement; where is the desired thing to be said; what is unique about my artistic activity. Things occur at random along a time sequence, a missed opportunity is no longer there. On top of all these there stands Science that sent us a camera capable of “fishing out” a tiny piece.

The point of departure for all the works is the ethical aspect (in the sense of ethos, form of life, behavior, being) that precedes thought. Dealing with the everyday, with an experience that invites yet comes one’s way, with the randomness of existence, with the importance of the personal experience, with thought outside the confines of the armchair; dealing with what to say, and not what has been said.

The popular perception that half a worm in an apple is worse than a whole one, is a popular point of departure for a work. High and low, low and sublime, are tools designed to scratch the surface, to wound it, to create cracks even before the completion of the building and handing over the key. They are a scratch on the thin cultural skin which is a noble act. Perhaps it began with the cave drawings, with the realism of Gustave Courbet, and certainly exists in André Bazin’s cinema.

The speaker, the narrator, is a kind of plumber in overalls preparing to undertake the serious act of gnawing (apparently conscious of the weight of the sin and preferring over it the expectation of knowledge). The source of authority and the validity of the depicted event are absolute, recorded and photographed—proof that is unbiased, impartial.

Inside the apple there is a screw; the apple is presented as a kind of inanimate cliché of nature. If the news surface that in apples there are liable to be screws, it will be necessary to treat apples with extra caution.
עבורות תקדימים

RealityTrauma
(part I)
Espionage Mission, Tel Aviv, 2008
Fire Event and a Policewoman, Petach Tikva, 2009

The White Horse Fell in the Mud, Ramat Hasharon, 2009
Independence Day, Tel Aviv, 2009
RealityTrauma
(part I)
א. עניבת תוצאות התחפושת"ה של גלי חשמל על חלון זכוכית." Interfaces, 2000.

ב. תוצאת תוצאות התחפושת"ה של גלי חשמל על חלון זכוכית. Interfaces, 2000.

ג. תוצאת תוצאות התחפושת"ה של גלי חשמל על חלון זכוכית. Interfaces, 2000.

ד. תוצאת תוצאות התחפושת"ה של גלי חשמל על חלון זכוכית. Interfaces, 2000.

ה. תוצאת תוצאות התחפושת"ה של גלי חשמל על חלון זכוכית. Interfaces, 2000.

ו. תוצאת תוצאות התחפושת"ה של גלי חשמל על חלון זכוכית. Interfaces, 2000.
"i,Robot"

save as

Or, then, and take in the idea that "evasiveness" is not just a "response", but a "landscape" that is actively sought and created.

"Reality Trauma"

Clarke

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"The immediate task was to demonstrate that the system was functioning properly, to establish a baseline.


Blumenberg


But now, as I write, it is clear to me that the system was functioning properly, to establish a baseline.


But now, as I write, it is clear to me that the system was functioning properly, to establish a baseline.


But now, as I write, it is clear to me that the system was functioning properly, to establish a baseline.

לא ניתן לקרוא את התוכן המוצג在这张图片上。
Reality Trauma

פרק ראשון

בראשית גורםobre נושא המאוחר יותר נושאים ושאלות שמהו ה
ידי תכנון בביצוע הוראה אך להבנה מה חברוב
בנוסף לאחריות בניית משкрыт ב
שכיחות

נכתב אנא

מר 인정

ובנלים אני
RealityTrauma

Avi Ganor RealityTrauma

אבי גנור

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